

15 November 2016

71st session of the General Assembly

**Opening statement by H.E. Peter Thomson,
COP22, Marrakech**

Your Majesty, the King of Morocco,
Your Excellency, Minister Mezouar, President of COP22,
Your Excellency, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Your Excellency, Ms. Patricia Espinosa, Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on
Climate Change,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour this morning to address the 22nd Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP22).

I thank the Government and people of Morocco for their generous hospitality in hosting this COP22 meeting and for their tireless efforts to make the Conference a success.

I congratulate H.E. Salaheddine Mezouar on his election as COP22 President.

I would also like to applaud H.E. Patricia Espinosa on her appointment as Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC. We are fortunate to have the leadership and expertise of both of you as we look to drive action on climate change.

I also would like to extend my deep appreciation to the Presidency of COP21, as well as UN Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon. Their efforts to mobilize world leaders in the ratification process were fundamental to delivering the Paris Agreement.

Excellencies,

In a period of less than 12 months, the Paris Agreement was agreed, adopted, and ratified by enough countries to enable its entry into force. Today we will witness the launching of the first meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement.

The speed of this progress sends a clear message to the world of the urgent need to act on climate change, and of our collective commitment to do so.

I extend my profound congratulations to those countries that have already moved to ratify the Paris Agreement, and urge all other State Parties to do so without delay. Moreover, the world cannot afford any country to regress on commitments. Momentum by all must be maintained.

Excellencies,

Addressing climate change is no longer only an investment in future generations. The impacts of climate change are being felt today, by every country.

The last few years have been the hottest in recorded history, with current trends in greenhouse gas emissions pointing to further warming.

Catastrophic climate events are already affecting hundreds of millions of our fellow human beings. Prolonged droughts of increased severity, melting glaciers, and rising sea levels, are increasing food insecurity, exacerbating diseases, disrupting lives and livelihoods, and forcibly displacing people and entire communities.

Storms of increasing ferocity are wreaking havoc in our countries. This year, Hurricane Matthew devastated Haiti, and Tropical Cyclone Winston swept through my own country, Fiji. These storms take away the lives of our people, destroy our homes and infrastructure, and set back our development efforts by many years.

Due to rising sea levels, the very existence of some countries is under threat.

Urgent action on climate change must therefore be seen as a moral, environmental, scientific, and developmental imperative, guided by ambition, action and equity.

Excellencies,

The scientific community tells us that it is possible to bend the curve on current trajectories by curbing the growth of global greenhouse gas emissions.

To do so we have to transform the global economy in a manner that drives inclusive economic growth while decoupling it from global greenhouse gas emissions. Countries and corporations have already proven this can be done.

To this end, I encourage all Parties to the Paris Agreement to implement and enhance ambition of your Nationally Determined Contributions without delay.

Excellencies,

The aggregate result of all current global pledges by Parties under the Paris Agreement leaves an 'emissions gap' between what has been pledged, and what the scientific community tells us is required to meet the objectives of the Paris Agreement.

Raised ambition and scaled up mitigation action are therefore needed.

Here in Marrakech it is incumbent on the international community to pursue these efforts collectively, and in accordance with the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities, and respective capabilities.

Excellencies,

Increasing the use of low-carbon energy sources in the global energy mix is vital, including through renewables such as wind and solar energy, whose costs continue to decline.

Governments, the private sector, civil society, local authorities, and other partners are increasingly investing in smart and viable climate solutions that will achieve transformation to a resilient and low emissions global economy. However, these investments must be scaled up.

Indeed, climate action is a profound catalyst for the creation of jobs and improving livelihoods across our world. New and reinvigorated partnerships will be critical to achieving this transformation.

Excellencies,

The transition to inclusive low-carbon economies will require a scaling-up and mobilizing of finance.

The provision of finance was an important milestone in the Paris Agreement, and it is crucial that developed countries scale up their commitments to mobilize USD\$100 billion annually by 2020, in support of developing countries' climate action.

In this regard, I express sincere appreciation for the very significant level of pledges already made by developed countries.

Definition of a clear roadmap to meet this finance target would further strengthen the trust created between Parties in Paris.

To achieve the scale of transformation needed, much more needs to be done, including through the mobilization of resources from a broad range of investments, and from public, private, blended, and alternative sources.

Balancing financial support to both mitigation and adaptation efforts is critical particularly to enhance developing countries' resilience to the impacts of climate change, including the loss of life and infrastructure, to address loss and damage, and to improve disaster risk reduction.

Excellencies,

While the Paris Agreement is a turning point for international cooperation to achieve global transformation on climate change, it is also central to our broader goals under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Achieving the universal and transformative 2030 Agenda promises to deliver on the future we want by eliminating extreme poverty; building peaceful and inclusive societies; empowering women and girls; increasing prosperity and combating climate change.

Current estimates indicate that implementing the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of 2030 Agenda will require annual financial flows of US\$ 5-7 trillion.

The urgent need for global action on both climate change and sustainable development, is why the principle objective of the UN General Assembly's 71st session is to achieve meaningful progress in implementing all 17 of the Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 13 on Climate Action.

Excellencies,

Climate action and the health of the Ocean are fundamentally linked and critical to preserving humanity's place on our planet. As many of you know the health of the Ocean is currently caught in a cycle of decline.

The UN will therefore be hosting an Ocean Conference next year in support of implementation of SDG14 – the ocean goal – as another critical building block in our efforts to drive global climate action and safeguard our planetary environment for future generations.

The Ocean Conference will be held at UN Headquarters in New York, 5-9 June 2017, co-chaired by the Governments of Sweden and Fiji. It will bring together high-level stakeholders from across government, business, industry, civil society, and the scientific and academic communities, in order to mobilize action to reverse the cycle of decline of the ocean's health – building on and amplifying the good work of many of you in this room.

Since the application of the necessary political will, scientific knowledge and strategic resources will be needed to drive this work forward, you are all encouraged to participate proactively in support of the Ocean conference.

In closing, I again thank His Majesty and the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco for hosting COP22 in the beautiful city of Marrakech, I congratulate you all for your dedication to climate action as we seek to find the solutions that will provide security and prosperity for current and future generations of humankind.

I wish you all a successful COP22. Thank you.